

THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

EDITED BY GEORGE HOUSTON.

No. 15.

NEW-YORK, NOVEMBER 1, 1828.

VOL. 4.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WATSON REFUTED.

LETTER X.

You begin your sixth letter by attempting to disprove the arguments of Thomas Paine upon Jeremiah. You acknowledge the disorder that prevails in the writings of this prophet; and you modestly assure us, that you do not know the cause. No more do I: and whatever incidents might have occasioned it, I am certain that, as it stands, it deserves no degree of credit. In a former part of your pamphlet you grant, that the history of the Jews is so connected with the prophetic part, that if the former was done away the latter could not stand; and now you inform us, "that prophecy differs from history, in not being subject to an accurate observance of time and order." This you think a matter of no importance, but, in my opinion, it is very material to know if a prophecy is written after the events it alludes to. I shall not follow far either your Lordship or Mr. Paine, in proving several of the prophecies of the Bible false; but if they are not prophecies, why should we trouble ourselves with disproving them. If they are scraps of history, we know that of the Jews to be so contradictory, imperfect, so completely without order, that one historical extract, or prophecy, will often contradict another; but much more generally these prophecies are strict enough, being copied from history, and embellished with a little of the figurative style of prophecy. As to Jeremiah, the works that go under his name, as well as those of Isaiah, appear on the face of them to be a collection of extracts from different historians.

While we know so little of the history and genuineness of these writings, we cannot possibly draw any conclusion concerning them, except that they are in the utmost disorder, and that when writers intermingle history with prophecy, we are at a loss to know which is which. I cannot forbear to mention the ludicrous story of Elisha, the children, the bears that devoured the children of men, as you are pleased to call them. Whether Elisha did this as a prophet, I cannot but declare my abhorrence at your approbation of such an abominable cruelty, to murder individuals because they bestowed the appellation of Baldhead on another. According to the laudable custom of the church, you appeal to a miracle and conclude, that if God wrought a miracle it must have been just.

I suppose this comparatively as when he destroys whole cities for the sins of a few ; but is the very ground on which every crusader supported his massacres ; and every many imitates the conduct of Ahod, the treacherous murderer, patronized by Jehovah, without incurring the blame of a Bishop. Whether the ridiculous tale which you take for a sign of God, most probably of his cruelty, converted any person, is not known ; but as the event most undoubtedly never happened, you may suppose what you please. To murder them is not the way to ingratiate ourselves with our fellow-citizens. If any person set a few bull-dogs on some children, and pretend to do so by authority from heaven, he would most undoubtedly be taken up by our officers of justice. In what respect do these brutal prophets differ from Mahomet, who decided all disputes by the sword ? Their business was to exterminate and murder by the direct command of God.

The writings of Ezekiel are considerably truncated. The very beginning of his prophecies shews it. The conjunction and texture of the whole work refers to something that ought to have preceded it. He begins saying, "That in the 30th year the heavens opened, and he saw visions of God." And in ver. 3, he adds, "That the Lord had inspired him often in Chaldea," which refers to some prophecies written in that period. Besides, Josephus's work, 10, chap. ix. of the Jewish antiquities, says, "That Ezekiel had prophesied that Zedekiah should never see Babylon. This is no where found in Ezekiel, but, on the contrary, in chap. xi. and xii. he says, "That the king would be carried a prisoner to Babylon."

As to Daniel, I have already noticed the great similarity between the first book of Esdras and his, and the probability that they came from the same author. The seven first chapters, except the first, were written in Chaldean, and are by the most learned thought to be taken from Chaldean chronologists. It is also thought by men of great learning, that the books of Esdras, Daniel, and Esther, were altered a long time after Judas Maccabeus, because it appears evident that Esdras could not have written the whole of them, since Nehemiah carries the genealogy of Jesuhga, the sovereign Pontiff till Jaddua, the sixteenth in number, who after the defeat of Darius went to meet Alexander. And Nehemiah, ver. 22, "The Levites, in the days of Eliashib, Joiadah, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers ; also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian." We have no reason to believe that Esdras or Nehemiah could survive fourteen kings of Persia, Cyrus having been the first who gave the Jews permission to rebuild the temple, from whom to Darius there are 230 years.

I now come to the famous prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel, which you exultingly mention as the most wonderful, and, at the same time, the most incontrovertible prediction in existence ; one which never can fail to confound the most perverse unbeliever. If I prove, that so far from being the surprising prophecy you pretend, it has altogether a different meaning, and can nowise apply to the coming of Christ, I shall think myself fully excused, if I do not go through every individual prediction in the Bible. The passage alluded to is in Daniel, chap. ix. ver. 24, to 27, as follows : "Seventy weeks are determined upon the people

and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the prince, there shall be seven weeks; and threescore and two weeks the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many, for one week; and, in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; and for the over-spreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

This passage is generally applied to the coming of Christ. The seventy weeks are supposed to mean weeks of years, or seven years each. Now it is evident, that it cannot apply to Jesus Christ; for if from the going forth of the commandment in the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus, until the coming of the Messiah, there were to be seven weeks or forty-nine years, how does this agree with what follows? "After threescore and two weeks (or three hundred and seventy-four years) shall Messiah be cut off." And again, "He shall confirm the covenant with many for a week" Did then Jesus Christ live four hundred and twenty-three years, or are there two Messiahs predicted? Dr. Prideaux acknowledges as to some parts of this translation of the Bible, that they are quite unintelligible. His alteration is in the punctuation, and according to it we read, that, *from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, to the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks*; and in verse 27, he puts *the half of the week*, instead of *the midst*. The explanation of the prophecy as thus altered, he gives as follows:—From the commandment given to Ezra by Artaxerxes Longimanus, to the accomplishment of it by Nehemiah forty-nine years, or the first seven weeks; from this accomplishment to the time of Christ's messenger John the Baptist, sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years; and from thence to the death of Christ, half a week, or three years and a half; in which half week he preached and confirmed the gospel with many. In all, from the going forth of the commandment, till the death of Christ, seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years.

In the first place, we confidently assert that Dr. Prideaux followed his fancy, not the original Hebrew, when he altered the punctuation. He is, however, justified in the alteration of half a week; but, granting all, let us see how it applies. Did the Messiah come after seven weeks from the commandment of Artaxerxes Longimanus? The explanation only says, that Nehemiah finished the work which Ezra began. What has this to do with the Messiah coming at the end of the first seven weeks? The prophet says, that after threescore and two weeks, the street and the wall shall be built, Again, and previously, that after the commandment

for the city to be built, the Messiah shall come in seven weeks. The learned divine, on the contrary, makes Daniel say, that John the Baptist began to preach the kingdom of the Messiah sixty-nine weeks after the commandment, and in the first seven weeks he talks of nothing but building the temple. Again, how does the oblation cease in half a week? In fact, the same objection occurs here, as to the passage as it is written in our Bibles. Daniel speaks quite clear, when he says, that "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks." If we find, in whatever explanation of the prophecy, that Christ did not come forty-nine years after this commandment, and that he did not live four hundred and thirty-four years afterwards, the whole must be an untruth. And, if the first period of seven weeks is united with that of threescore and two; that is, if the period of rebuilding the city, and of the coming of the Messiah be the same, then let divines inform us whether this really came to pass, and reconcile it with what follows, in ver, 26, that the city is to be destroyed at the same time. Did Christ confirm any covenant with many for seven years?

In my next I shall attempt to unriddle this enigma.

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CREATION—DEITY.

To E. L. Jr.

Your communication under this head, in the *Correspondent*, No. 13, Vol. 4, seems particularly addressed to "E. M." But as I desire to know the different opinions upon these topics, I venture respectfully to submit a few considerations to you; first, premising, as my own opinion, that it is impossible to form a positive decision from observation or known facts, whether there is or is not a Deity, or ever was or was not a Creation. It appears to me unreasonable "that the world with all the things therein, should be created without a Creator;" but I think it quite as philosophical to suppose that the universe and its order could exist from eternity to eternity without a Creator, as for your "intelligent being," or *uncreated cause*, to exist without a prior cause.

Admitting, however, for the sake of argument, that there is a Creator, which we agree to call God, that "all things were created by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made;" I would ask what kind of being it is? Is it, as the "Assembly of Divines" have declared, infinite, eternal, and therefore, necessarily immaterial, filling all space, and impossible to be, in any form, in one place more than another? Is it the material being which the bible so curiously describes as so frequently holding familiar intercourse with the diminutive mortals on this little globe, and even speaking to one of them face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Ex. xxxiii, 11,) who is represented as making clothes, (Gen. iii, 21,) and building houses, (Ex. i, 21,) as having a woolly head, (Dan. vii, 9,) a sorrowful heart, (Gen. vi, 6,) a fiery mouth, (Psalms, xviii, 9,) with a sword coming out of it (Revelations i, 16,) and numerous other shapes and attitudes equally extravagant? Or is it, as I think deists imagine, the almighty governor of the world; who controuls the planets, regulates the elements, rules the winds, and

directs the courses of the rivers ; whose will it must be that evil should exist, or he would not tolerate it ; whose emissaries, drought, famine, inundation, tempest, whirlwind, pestilence, &c, are occasionally let loose, in their destructive fury wherever he choses to direct them ; and who, in all the calamities which these inflict, punishes the just and unjust indiscriminately ? Is God either all or neither of these ? If neither, what kind of being is it ?

CLYTUS.

EXISTENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

MR. EDITOR,—One of your correspondents on the subject of Philo Judæus and Josephus, (Jewish writers concerning the domestic and political state of the Jews during the very period when Jesus Christ is supposed to have existed) omitting to make any mention or allusion to Christ, or the transactions detailed by the Evangelists, observes, incidentally, that the letter of Pliny the younger to Trajan concerning the Christians, is a *forgery* ; and that the more learned of the German critics have given it up. He is right : among the literati of Germany it is generally deemed spurious. The Clergy, of course, pretend to think otherwise ; but those who are disinterested in the question, and are competent to the enquiry, reject the passage. I cannot go at length into the objections to the genuineness of this letter ; but as some of your readers, probably read German, I refer them to “*Neue Versuche die Kirchenhistorie der ersten Jahrhunderte mehr aufzuklaren* : by Jo. Salom. Semler. Leipsic, 1788 Fesc. 1, p. 119—246,” who adduces nine arguments against the authenticity of this letter. Semler was supported by Corrodi, in his treatise entitled “*Beytrage zur Beforderung des vernunftigen Denkens in der Religion*—P. 13, p. 1—35,” Semler was replied to, by A. C. Haversaas, in “*Vertheidigung der Plinischen Brife uber die Christen gegen die Einwendungen der H. D. Semlers* : Gottengen, 1788.”

The opinion of Semler, was also opposed by Gottlieb Herman Gierig, in his edition of the letters of C. Plin. Secundus, Leipsic 1802, who speaks of Semler's learning, with high respect, acknowledging his “*laudabile in monumentorum antiquorum fide examinanda studium*.” But Gierig was of the Clergy. Gierig's argument in favor of the authenticity of this letter, is, that it is cited by Tertullian, and by Eusebius ; and that Aldin considers the MS. containing it, nearly as old as Pliny. Pliny died 113, Tertullian 216 or 220, Eusebius 340. Books at that time were not printed, but written. Every copy was a new edition, in which the transcriber might make what alterations he thought fit ; few people, comparatively, possessed them. The age of Tertullian, or a little before it, was the age of Christian forgery. Nor was there any more difficulty in the interpolation of this letter, than in the interpolations in Josephus and Longinus, which, till within this last century, have been successfully palmed upon the christian world. At present, indeed, when the characters of the fathers of the Church, and their propensity to lying and to forgery, is universally known and acknowledged, no clergyman of any character is found to defend these passages. During the century that intervened between Pliny the younger, and Tertullian, there was

time enough, and opportunity enough to propagate the forged copies. And the same motives that dictated the forgery of the two first chapters of St. Matthew, of the notorious passage of the three witnesses, 1 John, v, 7; of the interpolations in Josephus and Longinus, the Epistle of Pilate to Agabus, and the fifty gospels, acknowledged to be spurious by the Christian church, existed to dictate the letter in question. A set of men so utterly regardless of veracity, so thoroughly base and unprincipled as to the means by which their doctrines were to be propagated, have never appeared before or since as the early christians. This is a character to which I pledge myself to produce ample testimonies from modern christian writers of the best repute.

That such a man as Joshua or Joseph, whom we call Jesus, the anointed, (Christ) might have lived at Jerusalem; and might have suffered for sedition, or some other offence; and might have left some followers among the ignorant multitude, like Brothers, Joanna Southcote, or Jemima Wilkinson, is possible; but that the facts related by the authors called evangelists should have happened as they have related them, and have been utterly unknown to Philo Judæus, or to Josephus, is quite impossible. As to the Evangelists, who they were, when they wrote, where they wrote, in what language they wrote, who can tell?

DUBITATOR.

NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1828.

A LECTURE,
 DELIVERED AT THE FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION,
 On *Death*.—By a Member.
 (Concluded.)

However we vary the business of our lives, unless it tends to something beyond the enjoyments of the present moment, they become tiresome and irksome. The mind always requires something beyond its present gratification to interest; some prospects for increasing its enjoyments, to occupy it for a length of time, to produce the excitement called hope, for those periods of time which we suppose will succeed the present, which we designate as the future. It is this principle of the mind which has given rise to the chimera of a future existence, a state beyond the grave; and has decorated it with flowers and fancies to hide the pain and hidiousness of the certainty of death. It is this principle which has produced the dreams and vagaries of poets, and fanatics; throwing them into every possible shape and form, producing that variety of ideas and opinions which are presented in the different religions that have existed amongst mankind. But no real information has yet been given to man, to satisfy the searcher after truth, on this subject.—The Old Testament of the Jews, scarcely mentions any thing of it. Dust thou art, &c. and man has no pre-eminence over beast, &c. show that those people entertained no hope of a future existence. In the New, there is nothing definite, or consistent; all is vague, and inconclusive.

While some conclude that the saint and the sinner go directly to their respective allotments, others suppose an intermediate state, until that time of future reckoning, which is believed in by all the followers of the illegitimate Jew ; when every one's account is to be balanced, and the destiny of each assigned ; while some assert that *all* are to be happy ; and reasoning from the premises of others, we might say that all are to be eternally miserable. How these discordances are to be reconciled, we leave to themselves to settle with each other.

The followers after truth, will seek it wherever they may find it, although it may disappoint their hopes and wishes, and lead them to confess their own ignorance ; and *that* they must do with regard to a future existence, for here we must admit, that no knowledge exists of any such state. From our observation of the operations of the laws of Nature, which mean nothing but matter, we know that death, or dissolution, constantly occurs ; we see those who have accompanied us through life, who have cherished our feelings, who have grown up with us and around us, who have been the child " muling and puking in the nurse's arms," grown up to be the lords of the universe, enjoying all the pleasures and happiness of which human nature is capable, become by death, as nothing, no longer capable of enjoyment ; but the materials of which they were formed, mingle with the elements of matter, and the form is destroyed. Beyond this we know nothing, we can discover nothing. Can we suppose the order of nature is to be changed, the eternal laws of matter are to be reversed, cause and effect to cease ? We may indulge in such fantasies, and the weakness of the human mind may be pardoned for such indulgence, but it will not change the motions of the universe, by which the continual succession of beings must take place on this globe ; it will not revive the identity which each enjoys ; it will not produce immortality, but in idea. But so far from being alarmed at this, we should rejoice ; we will no longer then be terrified at what we cannot avoid : we will learn that it is in vain for man to deceive himself ; and a knowledge of his true condition in nature, and his relationship with all existence, will furnish a consolation superior to all the theological ideas of antiquity. It has been asserted, that religion softens the pillow of the dying, and smooths the descent to the grave ; but fact and observation are in contradiction to this, notwithstanding the round assertions of fanatics and tract societies.

In truth, more than half of mankind die without knowing it ; in most of the rest, the mind, shattered and weakened by disease, regards death with sensations unassociated with religion, or any reference to futurity. But how can religion be a comfort, when it makes the state altogether uncertain to which we are to be removed—teaching, as it does, that all mankind are condemned and liable to damnation for the sin of one—that a few only are to be exempted ; the terms of exemption altogether uncertain, and incongruous—rendering the mind of the dying in the torments of hope and fear, on the rack of doubt, whether he be an exempt or not ; for proofs of one's being an elect or not are so inexplicit, that it is impossible for any to be ascertained of it ? Even were this christian doctrine of election true, I would prefer to die in unbelief, that I might have a few moments of calm tranquility, without anticipating my tor-

ments before they began ; and if the other, the undefined bliss were to be my destiny, it would be time enough when I arrived at it. " Those," says Plato, " that continually think of death are true philosophers ; they are the only persons who do not fear it." Epicurus advises, " to accustom yourself to think that death is nothing, in reference to us, since pain and pleasure depend upon the sense ; and death is nothing but the privation of that sense. Could we convince the mind that death does not any way concern us, it must be a happy means of passing life in the greatest tranquility, without troubling ourselves with the uncertainty of the future, and without flattering ourselves with the hopes of immortality. To live, can be no unhappiness to him who is once persuaded that the time of dissolution is attended with no evil. It is not the instantaneous fear of death alone, that gives disturbance, and is avoided ; but the sadness and melancholy that the mind gives over to, during the uncertain expectation of it, that needs relief. And is it possible, that at the presence of a thing not calculated to excite trouble or disturbance in us, we should afflict ourselves so excessively with the simple thought of its drawing nigh ? With regard to ourselves, death, that seems to be the most formidable of all evils, is but a mere chimera, because it is nothing at all while life remains ; and when it takes place, life ceases, so that it cannot be said to exercise any power over the living, or the dead ; the former not being yet sensible of its empire, and the latter having once passed it, are sheltered from its attacks. The bodily pains of death are seldom perceptible, and probably never very great ; therefore, this should not terrify us."—*Epicurus*, p. 104.

Some are apt to wish they could decline death, because they consider it as the greatest of evils ; they are often tortured by the unwillingness they find in themselves to forsake the pleasures it deprives them of, and the dread of eternal inaction it brings with it. Such men are apt to be afraid of death and to shun it ; they afflict themselves without reason, since the loss of life hinders them from being sensible of any evil, from ceasing to be. And as we do not choose our food by its quantity, but by its goodness, so the number of years does not make the happiness of life, but it is the manner of passing it that causes all its pleasures. What, then, should that manner be, to produce the greatest pleasures ? Confucius says (48th max.) wouldst thou learn to die well ; Ans. learn to live well.

Epicurus teaches that the grand aim of all our actions, is to decline pain of body, and uneasiness of mind ; and that virtue leads to this. And though the virtue most esteemed by Epicurus, was not of that active kind which is most requisite for the benefit of society, by promoting the happiness of others, it yet conduced by the avoidance of the commission of evil, and seeking ease and tranquility, to pleasing recollections in death, and thus rendered the last moments contented and happy. But that more active virtue, which is productive of more immediate benefits to society, which induces the promotion in every way in our power, of the happiness of others, and even by the sacrifice of the temporary good of ourselves, to obtain comforts and advantages for our friends, cannot but be productive of still greater contentment, and still happier, and more tranquil an exit, than can that faith which maketh whole through grace.

For that happiness and contentment which derives its support from our own deeds, must be far superior to that which depends upon the actions of another, or the death of an innocent person. But fanaticism is struck with horror at our dependance upon human efforts ; upon the weakness of human reason. The immoral effects of this faith upon society has frequently been demonstrated ; and it is a point in which all schools are agreed that moral rectitude is necessary to the well being of society, however different may be the way to which we may arrive at it. But can a faith which cherishes crime, by promising an equal happy death to him who has led a vicious, and detestable life, and commits every crime, as to him who has spent his whole life in the practice of virtue, by promoting the happiness and enjoyment of his fellow man, in every way in his power, promote good morals and encourage virtue ? Man is by nature a social animal, and his social happiness depends upon his practicing certain social virtues, which if this doctrine of faith were true, that puts upon a par the honest man and the knave, would be entirely destroyed ; for the same tranquility would be enjoyed, the same contentedness, the same self-satisfaction, whether a man had pursued the path marked by a Washington, and a Jefferson, or that adopted by a Caligula, or a Nero. Much has been boasted of the good effects and of the necessity of a future state of rewards and punishments, for mankind to keep them in the straight path of virtue and rectitude ; but this doctrine of death bed repentance, of washing out of sins by faith, through the blood of the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the whole world, completely destroys them, if there was any truth in the proposition.

It has been asserted, by a late writer of great respectability, that free-thinkers, although they dispise self-denial, and mortification, to procure a life of happiness in a future state, find themselves necessiated to practice them, to procure present enjoyment. And, to a certain degree, this is true, especially when public good, and the happiness of others require ; and it is in this way that self love acts through reason ; self love, guided by reason, will teach this. Since this is the case, all presumption against self denial, and attention, to procure comforts and enjoyments, are shut out. The constitution of nature is as it is ; our happiness and misery arise from our conduct, and depend upon it ; and most of the various miseries of life, which people bring upon themselves, might be avoided by self denial.

It is from this common consent, to put a restraint upon our personal feelings, in the pursuit of rational pleasures ; from this social impulse of our constitution, that every man, belonging to the same state or community, becomes a part of every man, and cannot, even if he would, be an indifferent spectator of the wo or the weal of his neighbor ; and hence arises the strong bond of sympathy, or fellow-feeling ; and " true self-love, and social, are the same." While, as the line is drawn still closer, and we associate together more frequently, and more intimately, we become, from the great, and powerful principle of habit, still more kindred part of each other. Hence the origin of the higher public virtues of patriotism, generosity, gratitude, friendship, conjugal fidelity, filial love, &c.; the exercise of which, in our relative situations of life, whether we contemplate it at the time, or whether we do not, is by our own constitu-

tion or organization rendered essential to our individual happiness ; a motive much stronger than the placing it upon actions approaching at a great distance of time, because it is tangible, and is always before our eyes. But the injustice of the idea, that our happiness, in a future state, is to be dependant upon our actions in this, cannot but be apparent to every one who examines it impartially. That the actions of a moment, as it were, as our lives, are compared with the continuation of time, called eternity, that the commission of deeds, the effects of which are bounded to so narrow a space, should be followed by a punishment that is to have no end, when too, that punishment is to have no adequate good effect in correcting the consequences of those actions, but rather is the increase of the evil, by an increase of suffering ; when too, it is acknowledged, that these do not rectify the propensities of evil sinners who undergo them ; and, if it did, and purified them, although they become pure spirits, they are to suffer to all eternity, although they have thrown off their bad parts. The probability is, that this idea was suggested for the purpose of giving an additional motive to mankind, to pursue a moral course of conduct through life, and counteract natural propensities, as we frighten children with bugbears and horrid stories, to keep them in subjection, when we have sufficient means without. But although the motive may have been a good one, it is grounded upon the greatest absurdity, and the grossest inconsistency, as well as upon injustice and cruelty.

Progress of Liberal Opinions.—Our letters from Mr. Offen are to the 24th ult. On the whole line of the canal he is welcomed in the most cordial manner. At Rochester, he delivered a lecture before a crowded and respectable audience, amongst whom were two Presbyterian, and two Methodist preachers. One of the latter, having taken notes of the discourse, challenged Mr. Offen to a public discussion, which he readily agreed to.—The Court House, where they met, was so crowded, that several ladies and gentlemen could not get in. The *reverend* gentleman expatiated at great length in support of his theological opinions ; to which Mr. Offen replied.—During the whole discussion, which occupied about two hours and a half, the greatest order prevailed, and the utmost attention was given.—“I was treated afterwards (says Mr. O.) in the most friendly manner, and my reply was spoken of in terms which I cannot mention till I see you. You may rest assured that the priests have, by that lecture, a winters’ work cut out for them. One year here, (Rochester) if I am not mistaken, will raise an Association of the first character for talent and respectability.”

The following article, which we copy from the last number of “*Plain Truth*,” published at Rochester, fully corroborates Mr. Offen’s statement as to the progress of correct principles in that village :—

“*Public Sentiment* is undergoing a favourable change. The meeting called by the Presbyterian Party, and to have taken place on the evening of the 14th inst. at the Mansion House in this village, “to inquire into the expediency of attempting to establish a line of Packet Boats, to run only 6 days in the week,” was a complete *abortion*. The reason assigned by the party for this mortifying failure, in one of the noti-

ees, stated it to take place on the evening of the 15th ; consequently " the FEW gentlemen who met on the 14th, deemed it expedient to postpone" sine die. The meeting at the same place on the 5th of Feb. last, whose object was to induce Line Boats to run only 6 days in the week, was boastingly announced to have been composed of *Four Hundred* of the respectable citizens of Rochester—but mark the contrast, the meeting on the 14th, composed of the "*few Gentlemen*" did not exceed a baker's dozen. Thus is public sentiment triumphing over intolerance and fanaticism."

At Salina, such was the good feeling that prevailed, and the desire to hear Mr. Offen, that he found no difficulty in procuring the presbyterian church to lecture in. The bell was tolled for the occasion ; the audience, amongst whom there was about 50 ladies, was, as usual, respectable, attentive, and orderly. After the meeting broke up, Mr. Offen was earnestly solicited to deliver a lecture at Syracuse (one mile and a half from Salina), where it was expected the Episcopalian church would be obtained for him. The meeting was to be held in the evening of Friday, last week. In the forenoon of that day, Mr. Offen was waited on by the owner of one of the canal boats with an offer to convey to Syracuse, *free of expense*, every one at a distance, who could be reached in time, desirous of attending the lecture. He was also much gratified to learn, that much good feeling prevailed amongst those who held opposite opinions, and that the desire was pretty general to hear farther on the subject.

Mr. Offen expected to be in Utica on Sunday, where, we know, he is anxiously looked for by a large portion of the respectable inhabitants of that flourishing village. After spending a few days in Utica, he proposes again visiting Albany, Troy, and Hudson, and calculates on returning to New York by the end of November.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Crusaders. We give the following anecdote on the authority of Sismondi, author of the " History of the Crusades against the Albigenes :—"

The citizens of Beziers felt themselves intimidated, when they knew that their young viscount quitted them for a place of greater strength ; their inquietude redoubled when they saw the crusaders arrive, whose three bodies united under their walls after the middle of July, 1209.—They had been preceded by Reginald of Montpeyrroux, Bishop of Beziers, who after having visited the legate, and delivered to him a list of those amongst his flock whom he *suspected* of heresy, and whom *he wished to see consigned to the flames*, returned to his parishoners, to represent the dangers to which they were exposed, and to exhort them to surrender their fellow citizens to the " avengers of the faith" rather than to draw on themselves and on their wives and children, the wrath of heaven and the church. " Tell the legate," replied the citizens, whom he assembled in the cathedral of St. Nicaise, " that our city is good and strong, that our lord will not fail to succour us in our great necessities, and that rather than commit the baseness demanded of us, we would eat

our own children.' Nevertheless, there was no heart so bold as not to tremble, when the pilgrims were encamped under their walls ; and so great was the assemblage both of tents and pavilions, that it appeared as if all the world was collected there ; at which those of the city began to be greatly astonished, for they thought they were only fables what their bishop had come to tell them, and advise them. The citizens of Bezier, though astonished, were not discouraged : whilst their enemies were still occupied in tracing the camp, they made a sally, and attacked them at unawares. But the crusaders were still more terrible, compared with the inhabitants of the South, by their fanaticism and boldness, than by their numbers. The infantry alone sufficed to repulse the citizens with great loss. At this instant all the battalions of the beseigers, precipitating themselves upon them at the same time, pursued them so eagerly that they entered the gates with them, and found themselves masters of the city before they had even formed their plan of attack. The knights learning that they had triumphed without fighting, inquired of the legate, Arnold Amalrich, Abbot of Citeaux, how they should distinguish the Catholics from the heretics ; who made them this much celebrated reply, "*Kill them all ; the Lord will know well those that are his.*"

SABBATH BREAKERS !

A Serious Matter. —A few months ago (says, "Plain Truth," published at Rochester,) before any orthodox shoe shop had been established in Rochester, our fanatic townsman, Bissell, sent to a pious deacon of the church at Palmyra, for a pair of boots. In due time the boots arrived—but, as if in derision of the "sanctified purpose" for which they were intended, they took passage in the mail stage, and actually travelled the whole distance from Palmyra to Rochester on the Holy Sabbath !* On learning this, Mr. B. ordered the sinners back to Palmyra, under a solemn charge not to show their *soles* again in Rochester. For this single offence we presume the poor boots have been doomed to be trodden under foot by some-sabbath breaker all the days of their natural lives.

But we learn that a discovery of a more serious outrage on the 4th commandment has recently been made by the sagacious Bissell, which, it is feared, will be productive of the most calamitous consequences to the Presbyterian Party in Politics. The Boston Recorder, New York Observer, Western Recorder, and, last and not least, Bissell's own dear Rochester Observer ; those strenuous advocates for a Church and State Party, have been detected in a systematic violation of the Holy Sabbath ! It has been ascertained to a "dead certainty" that they have, from the first week of their birth, been in the habit of secreting themselves in some dark corner of Uncle Sam's mail bags, and have thus prosecuted their travels through the country on the Lord's Day. What marks the conduct of these papers with peculiar atrocity is, that while thus pursuing their travels on *Sunday*, they were filled with the most horrid imprecations against all others doing likewise !

* It is *orthodox* now-a-days to hold inanimate things accountable for "transgressions of the 4th commandment." Incredible as it may appear, the story about the boots is *strictly true*.

How our orthodox brethren mean to get out of this dilemma we have not learned. But as we are ever ready to "do good unto them that hate us," we would suggest to them the only mode that occurs to us at present: Let your publication days be changed to Monday, and receive no subscribers from a greater distance than your papers can travel before the Sabbath cometh.

Another.—It has at last leaked out that the New York Journal of Commerce, a daily paper established last fall by the presbyterians, has been guilty of sabbath-breaking. The papers for Monday, have been invariably printed on *Sunday*! The same paper has declaimed largely against sabbath breakers, and the supporters of sabbath breakers. O, consistency, thou art a rare, but a precious jewel!

Sunday Schools.—There is not, there cannot remain the shadow of a doubt in the minds of those who regard what is passing around them, that Sabbath Schools are destined to effect an end very different from their avowed object. These schools are said to have an important bearing upon the safety of our political institutions; and if properly conducted, we believe that they would be useful; for virtue and intelligence are the bulwarks of a free government. But there is such a thing as erroneous instruction. Schools may be multiplied; teachers may be procured; but of what advantage to the cause of virtue when the schools are established for the purpose of teaching error, and the instructors dare not deviate in their lessons from the commands of aspiring priests who employ them. We appreciate instruction, but we abhor the poison infused by these Sabbath schools, under their present directors. The books the children are taught, commanded or persuaded to read, are such as must stifle every noble sentiment, cramp free inquiry, enervate the intellectual man, and make the poor priest—destroyed child the dupe of any clerical despot.

These schools, instead of teaching the child useful knowledge, seem instituted, or at least supported, by the clergy, for the purpose of preventing its acquisition. We know in these schools a jargon is learned, but what is it worth? The child is taught the fall of man, the existence of a devil, the doctrine of the trinity, justification and a final perseverance of the saints, the joys of heaven, and the miseries of hell; and what can a child of ten or fifteen years old understand of these abstracted dogmas, which the learned, the acute, the philosophic, have strived in vain to reduce to the level of human comprehension. In addition to these, they may learn some scraps of scripture which are equally unintelligible, for no man does or can understand the Bible. They must then read about little Julia, two and a half years old, praying for her pa or ma, and about how wonderfully pious babies have been, and how important it is for children to go to meeting, to keep the Lord's day holy, to give or rather beg from their parents money to save the souls of poor heathen children, which God made on purpose to damn, &c.

Now what in the name of common sense is such instruction, but teaching ignorance or folly? It appears well calculated to bring back the dark ages, by making a pompous swell about education, when nothing but words are learned. Then the most important question was, whether

two angels could occupy, at the same instant, the same physical point; and we are in a fair way to have it the most important question to be discussed, whether one pleases God more by having a little water put on his forehead, or by being put all over under water? When such shall be the case, the people will be prepared to follow their priest.

Let those persons who are saying so much about Sabbath Schools, about the value of education, stop begging money to send missionaries to the South Sea Islands, Bengal, Bombay, and the Lord knows where; let them stop expending so much in building meetings; let them retrench the overgrown salaries of priests, and put the sums they thus acquire into common school fund, and they may have the pleasure of seeing the standard of education raised; may see the tone of moral feeling elevated, and society become virtuous and happy. Let the children be taught useful knowledge; but we detest the sickish stuff of these Sabbath Schools; we abhor their tracts, their prayers and their exhortations. They all have a tendency to make the scholars devoted to the church, but opposed to every thing else. Let them become schools of science; where the youthful mind acquires a knowledge of *things*, and not merely of *opinions*; and we will support them with what influence we have.

Persian Superstitions.—The Persians universally have a fixed belief in the efficacy of charms, omens, talismans, and other superstitions. Besides what they received since their conversion to Mahomedism, they have in general received all that their ancestors before practised. Indeed, the only difference is, that what was before authorized and commanded by the Magian religion, has been subsequently followed by the religion of Mahomet. They are, of all people, the most addicted to the idea of fortunate or auspicious days and hours, *dias fasti atque nefasti* of the Romans; and even on the minutest and most trifling occasions will seek for a lucky moment. Going a journey can never be performed without consulting a book of omens; each chapter begins with a particular letter of the alphabet, which is deemed fortunate or inauspicious; and should they unluckily pitch upon one of the latter, the journey must of course be delayed until a more favourable opportunity. Entering a new house, the putting on a new garment, with numberless other common and trifling occurrences, are determined by motions equally absurd and frivolous. In their marriages they pay a strict attention to this point; a lucky hour for signing the contract, and another for the wedding day, being esteemed absolutely necessary to the future happiness of the intended couple. Those who are in good circumstances, generally send for a Muunjin, or Astrologer, at the birth of a child, in order to calculate his horiscope with the utmost exactness.

To a man they have their talismans, which are generally some sentence of the Koran, or saying of their prophet Ali, written either on paper, or engraved on a small bit of silver, which the bind round their arms, or other parts of their body; but those of higher rank make use of rubies, emeralds or other precious stones. The women and children have small silver plates of a circular form, on which are engraved the

sentences from the Koran ; which, as well as the talismans, they bind about their arms with pieces of red or green silk, and look on them as never failing charms against the fascinations of the devil or wicked spirits (whom they call *deeds*) and whom they say are constantly roaming about the world to do all the mischief in their power.

As for their religious system, they believe there are nine Heavens, the lowest of which is that immediately above their heads : they imagine, therefore, that on the falling of a star, it is occasioned by the angels in the lower Heavens giving blows on the heads of the devils, for attempting to penetrate into those regions !

Among other customs of a superstitious nature, they believe that scorpions, of which there are numbers in the country, and very venomous, may be deprived of the power of stinging by means of a certain prayer which they made use of. The person who has power of binding, as it is called, turns his face towards the sign *Scorpio*, in the Heavens, which they all know, and repeats this prayer. Every person present claps his hands ; after this is done, they think they are perfectly safe : and if they should chance to see any scorpions during that night, do not scruple taking hold of them, trusting to the efficacy of this fancied all powerful charm. I have frequently seen the man in whose family I lived, repeat the above prayer on being desired by his children to bind the scorpions ; after which the whole family has gone quietly and contentedly to bed, fully persuaded they could receive no hurt by them.

Portuguese Superstitions.—The Portuguese, says the Duke de Chatelet, carry superstition to a greater length than any other nation. They place implicit confidence in their saints ; and though several worthy patriarchs have abolished most of the mummeries begotten by ignorance, the Portuguese character has prevailed. It reconciles the monstrous alliance of the most superstitious practices, with the most criminal excesses. The Portuguese adore the statutes of their saints, and violate the most sacred laws of morality, the most peremptory precepts of their religion ; they are incessantly passing from guilt to penitence, and from penitence to guilt ; they tremble at the mere mention of hell and the devil, and yet indulge in all the excesses of the most brutal debauchery ; their stupid credulity is encouraged by the Government itself. During the war of the Spanish succession, the portuguese troops, who espoused the cause of the Archduke, having no leader, and being desirous of having a Portuguese to command them, took it into their heads to elect St. Anthony, a native of Lisbon, and their patron for their general. The King, Don Pedro, directed his commission to be made out accordingly, with a salary of three hundred thousand reals. This saint is still commander-in-chief of the army, and every year, on the eve of his anniversary, the king waits upon him at his church, and carries with him the salary of this *valiant* general. Every body kneels as he passes, and worships, in this wooden image, the chief protector of Portugal.

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